

CHICAGO – U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) and local environmental leaders visited the shoreline of BP’s refinery in Whiting, Ind., today to inspect the area where BP received permission to dump 1,584 pounds of ammonia and 4,925 pounds of sludge daily. As part of a new multi-billion dollar expansion project, state and federal regulatory agencies approved a permit to increase BP’s Lake Michigan dumping of ammonia by 54 percent and industrial waste by 35 percent.

“BP should live up to the millions of dollars it spends on advertising to convince the public that they are environmentally friendly,” Congressman Kirk said. “No one argues against increasing our refinery capacity, but it should not come at the expense of the drinking water for 40 million people. The ammonia and industrial waste that will be dumped into the lake will be less than 15 miles away from downtown Chicago. The Great Lakes are the crown jewel of the Midwest and we should make every effort to keep them clean and safe. Until the company resolves this issue, BP should stand for “Bad Polluter.”

Added together, BP is now allowed to discharge nearly 1,200 tons of ammonia and waste each year. That is the equivalent of the weight of more than 10 “Beans,” the Millennium Park art sculpture.

Ammonia promotes algae blooms that can kill fish and trigger beach closings. Last year, 81 percent of Illinois beaches were declared unsafe due to algae and other pollution problems.

BP’s permit acknowledges that mercury has been found in the discharge in quantities that show a reasonable potential to exceed water quality standards. However, BP has five years to become compliant. Pregnant women in Illinois currently test 14 times above the background level for mercury in their blood.

Yesterday, Congressman Kirk and nearly 20 members of Congress sent a letter to USEPA Administrator Stephen Johnson requesting that the Agency review BP’s permit in light of concerns with compliance of the Clean Water Act and federal limits for mercury concentrations.

Congressman Kirk is also a cosponsor of H. Con. Res. 187, which calls on the State of Indiana and the EPA to reevaluate their current plan to allow BP to increase the amount of pollution the

company produces.

BP spends millions of dollars in its "Beyond Petroleum" campaign, an advertising effort to highlight the company's commitment to environmentally-friendly programs. The increased pollution will make BP one of Lake Michigan's largest polluters.